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CORONA Satellite

12 SEP 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Future Satellite Reconnaissance Program

1. You asked for our recommendations concerning our future satellite reconnaissance program in connection with several specific questions. Our answers to these questions are as follows:

(1) Question: If we flew a CORONA-J once every month, would we achieve desired coverage over a six-month period?

Answer: If we recovered a complete CORONA-J mission (two packages) once every month we would probably get back more photography than we need. We believe that the successful recovery of [] CORONA MURAL equivalents during the year would satisfy our requirements for reconnaissance photography at that resolution. We could not, however, satisfy these requirements completely by substituting half as many CORONA-Js. In order to get the desired periodicity of coverage we will probably have to plan on recovering [] evenly spaced CORONA-Js which might give us some unneeded area coverage. In addition, we would need two CORONA-Js on standby to cover failures or inability to turn the vehicle back on. The current difficulty with the CORONA-J is the short (one week) stay time or period of inactivity for the second package while in orbit. It might be possible for the engineers to remedy this difficulty with the CORONA-J by extending the period during which the second capsule could be allowed to remain inactive. If this period could be extended to as much as a month we might well end up with a vehicle well suited to the periodicity of our current requirements. If the life of the second package cannot be extended, however, it might be desirable to make a careful decision whether or not to activate the second half of each CORONA-J package on the basis of our actual need for coverage at that time.

NRO review(s) completed.

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(2) Question: Should we have CORONA WREALS always on standby?

Answer: We believe that we should always have at least one CORONA WREAL or CORONA-J on standby for contingency use. If the second half of CORONA-J can be made more reliable and the stay time extended to a month, and if an alternate emergency programmer can be built into the vehicle, the vehicle in orbit could be considered the standby.

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2. In addition to the foregoing, you earlier raised the related question of whether or not we were already getting too much satellite photography. This question was reviewed by a special panel headed by [redacted] of OMB. In general terms the panel concluded that we are not getting too much photography. The panel report contains some of the supporting data on which our recommendations for programming are based. A copy of the report is attached.

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